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THE SCHLIEFFEN PLAN: CASE HISTORY OF  
THE RELATION OF MILITARY STRATEGY TO  
NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

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# STUDENT ESSAY

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(Essay)

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## A B S T R A C T

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TITLE: The Schlieffen Plan: Case History of the  
Relation of Military Strategy to National  
Security Policy

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The national security policy of Imperial Germany during the decade prior to World War I is described in terms of the dynastic and diplomatic efforts made to split the Triple Entente and redress the Empire's political isolation. The related offensive military strategy designed to achieve by means of war the results that could not be realized by the civil authorities is then considered in the context of, first, the Schlieffen Plan proper and, second, the drastically modified strategy actually employed during the First Marne campaign upon the outbreak of war. After an analysis of the merits and disadvantages of these two offensive strategies there is a brief exposition of the contrasting defensive strategy that might have been employed instead of those planned and used. Finally the German experience is related to current U. S. defense planning and certain lessons derived from that experience are discussed in connection with the formulation of our national security policy today. Except for this latter section the essay is historical in nature and is based on research in diplomatic and military references.

The Great War of 1914-1918 was the most momentous event of this century bringing to an end a nostalgic old order and in the process terminating the tradition-hallowed existence of four great empires. Of perhaps even greater significance for us, this cataclysmic milestone of modern history was the midwife of a new politico-economic movement which has deeply influenced our world since 1917 and will probably continue to do so for a long time to come.

Who was responsible for this tragic denouement of old world history and what were the circumstances of its occurrence? Historians have considered and debated these questions at great length. Professor Sidney B. Fay<sup>1</sup> was probably the most respected and most articulate exponent of the modern revisionists who undertook to substitute objective appraisal based on scholarly research for the biased political polemics of the immediate post-war years. Professor Fay's conclusion was that primary responsibility for the War should be attributed to Austria-Hungary and Russia in that order.<sup>2</sup> The responsible anti-revisionist school is perhaps best personified in Professor Bernadotte E. Schmitt.<sup>3</sup> In his view the German government did not deliberately precipitate the war but was willing to accept that risk and hence must bear primary responsibility.<sup>4</sup> Professor Luigi Albertini<sup>5</sup> can probably be said to have shared this view.<sup>6</sup>

Professor Fritz Fischer<sup>7</sup> has created something of a sensation in academic circles with his recent publication of a forceful and arresting

work<sup>8</sup> which--purportedly on the basis of newly discovered material-- attributes primary war responsibility to the German government as a calculated matter of policy. The basic thesis of Professor Fischer is that German leaders aspired to nothing less than world power status for their country (of the magnitude enjoyed by Great Britain prior to World War I and the United States and the U.S.S. R. after World War II) and were willing to deliberately precipitate a major war to achieve that goal. An equally respected contemporary German historian, Professor Gerhard Ritter,<sup>9</sup> has taken sharp issue with Fischer and shortly before his death published an almost point-by-point refutation of the principal points relied upon by Fischer.<sup>10</sup> However, it is not within the purview of this paper to delve into the much-discussed war guilt issue. Rather, of initial concern here, is a brief consideration of Imperial Germany's national security policy prior to the Great War, which is required to place in proper perspective the strategic planning of the Empire's military leaders.

#### NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY OF IMPERIAL GERMANY

During the two decades that followed the unification of Germany and proclamation of the Empire in 1871 Bismarck<sup>11</sup> followed a policy of consolidation which envisioned no further territorial acquisition in Europe. However, upon the accession to the throne of Wilhelm II Germany embarked upon an expansionist foreign policy which in broad terms can be summarized as consisting of (1) the achievement of hegemony in Europe,

(2) economic penetration of the Middle East, and (3) the acquisition of a colonial empire. The ventures undertaken in pursuit of this energetic policy included tariffs against Russian grains, efforts to secure control of the Baghdad railway, the pursuit of influence in Persia, acquisition of colonial possessions in central and southwest Africa, encouragement of the Boers in South Africa, attempts to penetrate Morocco, and the construction of a major fleet. Not unnaturally such an ambitious foreign policy caused friction with Russia, France and Britain which eventually culminated in the formation of the Triple Entente.<sup>12</sup>

Germany's national security policy was designed perforce to deal with the hostility that was engendered by the Empire's expansionist foreign policy. The two fundamental goals of the former were (1) to break the strategic "encirclement" of Germany, that is, to effect the dissolution of the Triple Entente and (2) to secure British neutrality and a free hand for Germany on the continent. These goals, in turn, were pursued through various efforts to strengthen the Triple Alliance<sup>13</sup> as a counterweight to the Triple Entente and through the initiation of a number of diplomatic initiatives.

Because of Germany's increasing isolation in the international community after the turn of the century her leaders attached great importance to strengthening the Triple Alliance. This consideration explains Germany's rallying to Austria-Hungary in the Bosian crisis of 1908 "like a knight in shining armor."<sup>14</sup> Similarly, German recognition

of her strategic dependence upon Austria and the consequent need to encourage Austrian fidelity to their reciprocal alliance obligations limited Germany's ability to restrain her partner in the summer of 1914. This fact largely accounts for the unqualified support of Austria in both Balkan crises.<sup>15</sup> The loyalty of her other alliance partner, Italy, was also courted. To this end, Germany procured the renewal of the Triple Alliance ahead of schedule at the end of 1911 by offering to support Italian seizure of Lybia from Turkey. In addition, by strengthening Italy's position in the Mediterranean, German leaders hoped to put pressure on Britain to negotiate with the Triple Alliance and thus to secure British neutrality.<sup>16</sup>

The goals of Germany's national security policy were also pursued through a series of diplomatic initiatives in the decade prior to the War. The first effort of significance was an attempt by the Emperor himself at dynastic diplomacy.<sup>17</sup> After preparing the way by supporting Russia in its 1904-1905 war with Japan,<sup>18</sup> Wilhelm met the Czar in Bjorko later in 1905 and persuaded his guest to agree to a treaty of alliance. Wilhelm's intention was that the agreement would form the first side of a triangular continental alliance consisting of Germany, Russia and France.<sup>19</sup> This grand design came to naught when the Russian foreign office vetoed the idea on the ground that France had not been consulted in advance. Wilhelm's failure was confirmed at the Algeiras conference of 1906 when Russia voted with France against Germany in the first Moroccan crisis.<sup>20</sup>



The next major German effort was the attempted use of the Agadir crisis in 1911<sup>21</sup> to arrive at an understanding with France. The immediate objective of negotiations was to resolve finally the Moroccan conflict. The terms proposed to France were German acquiescence in French acquisition of all Morocco in exchange for the cession to Germany of the French Congo. But the ultimate objective of German diplomacy was emasculation of the Entente Cordiale. At the height of these negotiations German authorities overplayed their hand when in a none too subtle effort to influence France they dispatched the warship S.M.S. Panther to Agadir. Finally perceiving the true significance of these events, Britain belatedly but vigorously supported France to end all German hopes of success. Indeed, inept German diplomacy here had the exact opposite effect of that intended. Instead of splitting the Entente Cordiale, these rather heavy-handed methods inspired military discussions between the Entente partners and strengthened the position of those British elements which favored expansion of the fleet.<sup>22</sup>

Imperial Germany's last and most promising opportunity to serve her national security needs through diplomacy occurred in 1912 during the Haldane mission.<sup>23</sup> Three related issues were discussed in the course of these extended negotiations. For Britain, the naval question was paramount; whereas, for Germany, political agreement was of first importance. For both, a colonial understanding was secondary but highly desirable. Although in the end Germany's representatives refused to

make any meaningful concessions on limiting the size of the growing German fleet, Britain still offered neutrality in the event of an unprovoked attack on Germany. The Germans insisted upon an absolute commitment of British neutrality (which would have required Britain to stand aside in the event Germany attacked France). German intransigence in this regard was, of course, unacceptable to the British. The immediate result was failure of the negotiations; the ultimate result was British recognition of the need to support France and to hasten the expansion of her fleet.<sup>24</sup>

In sum, German diplomacy had endeavored three times to split the Triple Entente. The dynastic effort at Bjorko in 1905 sought to persuade the Czar to align himself with a brother autocrat. The overtures to France at Agadir in 1911 aimed at a fundamental Franco-German understanding to eliminate France's strategic dependence on the Entente. And, finally, there was the effort to arrive at a definitive political agreement with Britain in 1912. All these bids failed; the price of failure was (except for the alliance with a decadent Austria-Hungary) political isolation. This, then, was the legacy which the civil authorities bequeathed to the military planners. What could the latter do to redress the frightening strategic imbalance?

#### THE JULY 1914 CRISIS

The civil authorities, notably the Emperor, the Imperial Chancellor, Dr. Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg,<sup>25</sup> and the Foreign

Minister, Gottlieb von Jagow,<sup>26</sup> were still in control of the Empire's destinies upon the sudden onset of the July crisis of 1914.<sup>27</sup> Their policy was one of localization of the Austro-Serbian dispute so that their ally might settle an old score without outside interference. If this policy had succeeded, the Central Powers would at least have obtained a very important diplomatic success and would have significantly altered Balkan power relationships to their own advantage; at most, they might have expected to discredit the Russo-French alliance and in effect to have rendered it a nullity.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, such a policy of unlimited support of an ally involved the hazard of general war under circumstances of very serious military disadvantage. If the risks were great, the stakes were greater.

As the tense July days sped by, each one filled with greater suspense and more diplomatic activity than its predecessor, and as the clouds of general war loomed ever more ominous, German leaders bent all their efforts to make Russia appear as the aggressor in the great power struggle and to secure British neutrality in the event a continental war did ensue.<sup>29</sup> In the first objective they were, with accommodating Russian ineptness, largely successful.<sup>30</sup> In the latter objective, of course, they were not. British neutrality has been characterized as the very cornerstone of German diplomatic efforts during the July crisis and there is little doubt that Bethmann and Jagow rolled on it.<sup>31</sup> Their misplaced belief has been described as "a miscalculation that almost bordered on delusion" but one that was nevertheless genuinely held.<sup>32</sup>

Until the very end of July German military authorities took no part in the feverish diplomatic activities emanating from the Wilhelmstrasse. Indeed, the Emperor had not even sought the opinion of the Chief of the Great General Staff, the younger Moltke,<sup>33</sup> when he gave his unconditional pledge of help to Austria on 6 July. For his part Moltke had agreed with Bethmann that Germany should remain militarily quiet so long as Russia did not mobilize.<sup>34</sup> Contrary to popular opinion outside Germany, the Imperial Army was not hawkish prior to the initiation of hostilities in 1914 but adhered to a strictly professional ethic which regarded war as an instrument of politics, with the soldier as the junior partner of the statesman who controlled the destiny of the nation.<sup>35</sup> Professionalism was promoted by complete devotion to the crown and by the peculiar governmental structure of Imperial Germany. Whereas civil authority was concentrated in the Emperor and Chancellor, military authority was fragmented among the Ministry of War, the Military Cabinet and the Great General Staff.<sup>36</sup> Offsetting to some extent this organizational advantage of the top civil leadership was the fact that the Imperial Army tended to become a "state within a state."<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless the important point for the subject of this paper is that, until the final climax of the July crisis, the civil authorities were in complete control of policy decisions.

The erosion of this condition began in the afternoon of 30 July when Moltke urged his Austrian counterpart to mobilize against Russia immediately in response to the partial Russian mobilization. Inasmuch

as Bethmann was simultaneously urging restraint on the Austrian civil authorities, the question naturally arose in Vienna as to who ruled in Berlin. Specifically at issue at this time was British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey's "halt in Belgrade" mediation proposal.<sup>38</sup> Historians disagree both about Moltke's motivation and the substance of his advice to Austrian military authorities. As regards motivation, the better view is that the German Chief of Staff was motivated solely by military considerations, that is, by the need to prevent the Russians from gaining a dangerous headstart in mobilization.<sup>39</sup> With respect to the substance of his advice, there is also disagreement. According to the more generally accepted view, Moltke explicitly advised rejection of Grey's proposal.<sup>40</sup> Under this interpretation his action has been condemned as nothing less than "a usurpation of the powers of the Chancellor."<sup>41</sup> But even as so construed, Moltke's advice apparently had no effect on events, because that counsel arrived in Vienna after the Dual Monarchy's decision had been made.<sup>42</sup> The next day (31 July) civilian control slipped further when Moltke, contrary to Bethmann's wishes, secured the Emperor's approval of general mobilization and a declaration of war against Russia.<sup>43</sup>

Civil-military relationships in this critical period are probably best illustrated by that incredible twelveth-hour confrontation between the Emperor and his first soldier which was occasioned by the arrival of a wire from Prince Lichnowsky<sup>44</sup> on the evening of 1 August holding out the prospect of British neutrality and a guarantee of French neutrality too,

if Germany refrained from invading France and attacked only Russia. The Emperor, in a transport of delight, immediately summoned Moltke and summarily ordered him to switch the then developing deployment of the whole German Army of almost two million from the French frontier to East Prussia in a bootstrap operation of instant improvisation that boggles the imagination. The aghast Chief of Staff attempted to explain to his naive imperial master that such an undertaking was quite impossible for technical reasons, that the only strategic planning prepared by the General Staff required a massive and lightning invasion of France, and that any other course was then out of the question. In this anguished response Moltke revealed the full extent of Germany's military rigidity. The Emperor insisted nevertheless that his command be obeyed and Moltke replied that he could not accept the responsibility of that decision. Distraught at the prospect of the hopeless confusion that was certain to follow, he returned to General Staff headquarters a broken man incapable of performing his duties. Soon thereafter another wire arrived from Lichnowsky, advising that his earlier wire had been in error.<sup>45</sup> Moltke was informed and told to proceed as he had originally planned. But he was so profoundly shaken by this shattering experience that he did not ever wholly recover.<sup>46</sup>

Why did the Chief of Staff have only one strategic plan of operations? And why was he so completely willing to entrust the fate of his country to its execution, regardless of circumstances or odds? The answers to

these questions were to be found in what has since been known as the Schlieffen Plan.

### THE SCHLIEFFEN PLAN

Count Alfred von Schlieffen,<sup>47</sup> Chief of the Great General Staff from 1891 to 1906, was acutely aware of Germany's emerging isolation as a result of her aggressive foreign policy. He realized soon after the turn of the century that, to redress the strategic imbalance this isolation was inducing, an extraordinary remedy would be required. It was already apparent to him that Germany faced the prospect of a two-front war against enemies whose forces would far exceed those available to him. He also believed that the German economy would not be capable of sustaining a protracted war.<sup>48</sup> For these reasons a quick victory over one adversary at the very outset was an absolute necessity.

In searching the annals of military history for precedents that might offer guidance in the achievement of his goal, Schlieffen became fascinated by Hannibal's classic victory at Cannae.<sup>49</sup> Rejecting the frontal attack as productive of only an "ordinary" victory in pushing back an adversary, he became convinced from his studies that a battle of encirclement, preferably conducted as an assault against both wings of the enemy, was the highest achievement of military strategy. The essence of his resulting strategic thought can be summarized as encirclement, attack against the enemy rear, and annihilation.<sup>50</sup>

Reversing the priorities (and theory) of the elder Moltke, <sup>51</sup>

Schlieffen selected France instead of Russia as the object of the first great attack. The distances were too vast in Russia to permit an immediate decisive result there and the limitless Russian space facilitated evasive tactics by the Czar's field armies. Further, the Russians had fortified the Narev line since the elder Moltke had planned to attack in that vicinity and with the improvement of their rail system they could mobilize much deeper in their huge country. France, on the other hand, with a much quicker capacity for mobilization was actually the more formidable adversary and thus should be engaged first. In addition, France's concentrated forces could be brought to decisive action much more easily. <sup>52</sup>

But, in considering the offensive to be launched against France, Schlieffen soon realized that a double envelopment in the Cannae fashion would not be feasible. First, there was insufficient space in western Europe for such a gigantic maneuver involving millions of troops. Second, he did not have enough men to effect an envelopment of both French flanks. (In absolute numbers the French Army almost equalled the German Army and some German forces had to be allotted to the eastern theatre.) Third, the recent French fortification of the Nancy-Epinal-Belfort area and the natural obstacles in Switzerland ruled out envelopment of the French flank in eastern France. Yet, annihilation of the French field armies was required and for this purpose it would not be enough simply to capture



Paris and force those armies into south-central France.

Therefore, Schlieffen decided to adapt the Cannae principle to the situation at hand by substituting a gigantic single envelopment for Hannibal's double envelopment. Though the form of the maneuver would be different, the end result in terms of total victory would be the same. Translating this concept into specific details, Schlieffen planned to have the great bulk of the German forces comprising his right-wing armies pivot on Metz and Thionville, wheel first due west and then southwest in a vast turning sweep through Luxembourg, Belgium and Holland, envelop the left flank of the French armies in northwest France, cross the lower Seine River and, turning abruptly east, attack those armies from the rear (while they were fixed in place by the German center armies) and roll them up against their own fortresses in northeast France or against the Swiss frontier. To ensure the required massive weight of his right wing Schlieffen established a strength ratio of right-to-left wings in the astonishing proportion of seven to one.<sup>53</sup> While the huge right wing was sweeping around to catch the French armies from the rear in a scythe-like action, the very weak left wing in Lorraine would fall back under the pressure of the French attack expected there, yielding the upper Rhineland and even Baden if required.<sup>54</sup> This French effort would actually facilitate the German right-wing sweep and draw French forces away from the area of strategic decision in northwest France. The whole operation<sup>55</sup> was prepared on a definite timetable with each movement

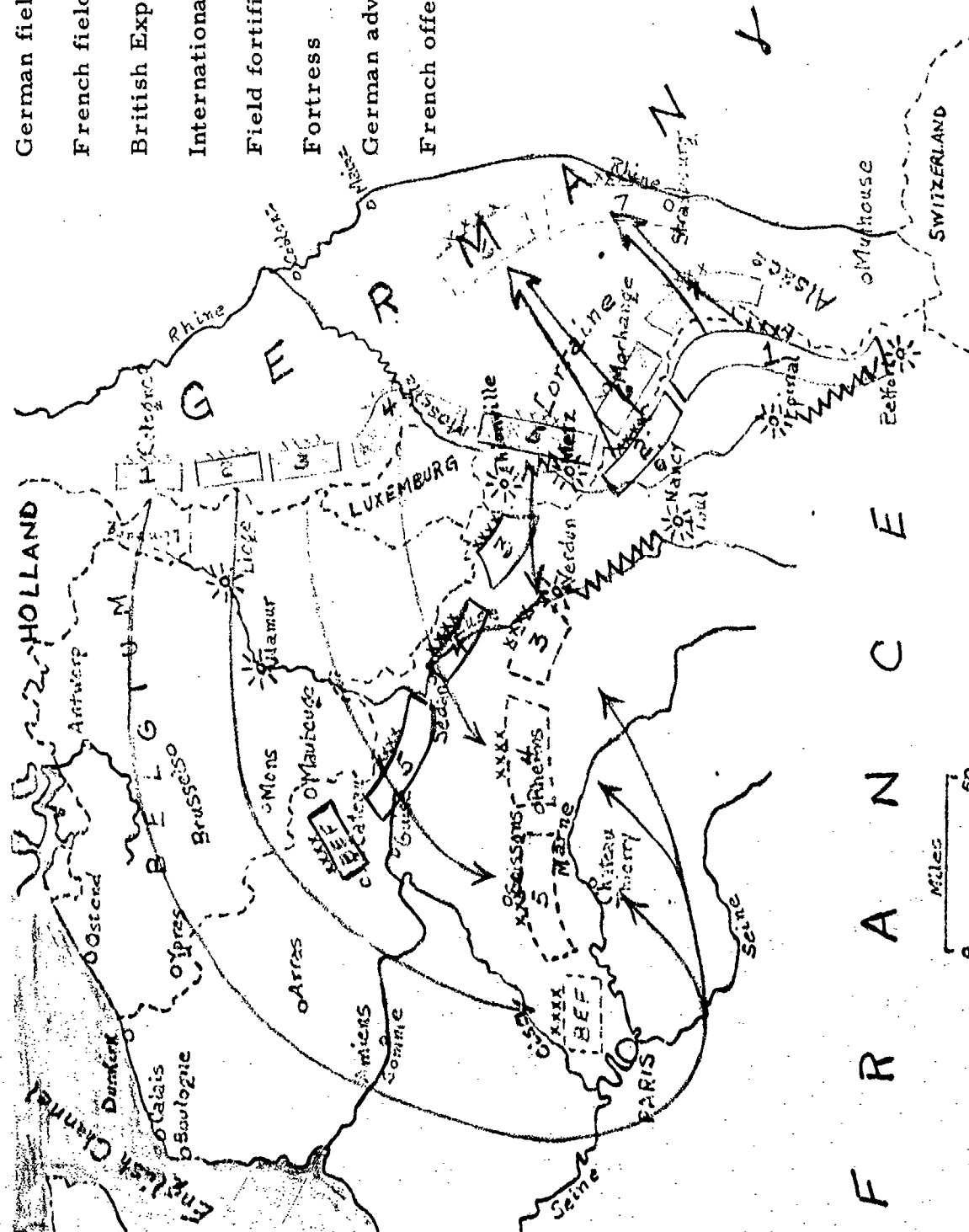
for every formation worked out in complete detail. (See Map 1 overleaf.)

This breathtaking concept cannot fail to excite admiration. Even the hostile Albertini refers to it as "this masterpiece of military science"<sup>56</sup> and Barnett goes so far as to characterize it as "the most grandiose, the most rigidly classical work of strategic architecture ever designed."<sup>57</sup> Indeed, it was brilliantly conceived. Its conceptual brilliance stemmed from its boldness and its ingenuity. The boldness derived from Schlieffen's willingness in the first instance to risk everything in a single, all-out bid for an immediate strategic decision in the western theatre. The magnitude of the risk can be judged from the fact that, in an ultimate sense, the outcome of the war would turn on the result of this one lightning thrust. In a more specific sense, the risk taken to insure the needed strength of the right wing in western France involved exposing East Prussia (and beyond that Prussia proper) to the onslaught of the Russian "steam roller"<sup>58</sup> and yielding the upper Rhine area to a French invasion. Such risks required iron nerve on the part of the Plan's executor.

The Plan's ingenuity derived from the effect it had of turning to German advantage the expected French strategy<sup>59</sup> of attacking in Lorraine and Alsace. The anticipated French offensive would draw French forces away from the real area of decision in northwest France. Once drawn deep into the Rhineland (and perhaps even into Baden) these forces could not be redeployed in time to redress the strategic result emanating from the envelopment of the French left. An initial French tactical success

# THE SCHLIEFFEN PLAN

- German field army
- French field army
- British Exp. Force
- International boundary
- Field fortification
- Fortress
- German advance
- French offensive



MAP I

on the Rhine, regardless of how impressive in appearance, would be meaningless in the face of the ultimate German strategic blow. The Schlieffen Plan is often referred to as a giant wheel but a better analogy is that of a revolving door of the type commonly used in public buildings. The harder the French pushed on one side, the more readily would the other side swing around behind them. In this fashion the French would contribute to their own demise. The subtlety of this interface of the two competing strategies is not always appreciated by some students of the Plan. Ironically, the younger Moltke must be included in their number.

#### MOLTKE'S 1914 CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE

If the Schlieffen Plan was as brilliant as claimed, why did it not succeed when Germany went to war in 1914? The simple answer to this question is that it was not employed.<sup>60</sup> For Moltke, who succeeded Schlieffen as Chief of the General Staff in 1906, the risks of his predecessor's great plan were too great and its ingenuity too refined. As a consequence he vacillated between a much-attenuated version of Schlieffen's strategy and a contrasting concept of his own. The end result was strategic defeat in the campaign--and ultimately loss of the war--for Germany and personal collapse for Moltke himself.

Moltke's first change involved abandonment of passage through Holland. Schlieffen had intended to bypass Liege and Namur on the north by going through the Limburg salient and masking those Belgian

fortresses with a small covering force. Moltke, upon abandoning this procedure, hoped to achieve much the same result by using a specially trained force to seize Liege by a coup de main on the third day of mobilization before Belgium was even aware of the invasion. The seizure of Liege was required because, without going through Limburg Province, the Belgian fortress could not be by-passed.<sup>61</sup> The effect of this change was the loss of the several days needed to reduce the fortress--a delay of significant importance in view of the eventual ability of the French to reinforce their threatened left flank by redeploying forces from the Moselle front in northeastern France at the very last moment when the campaign reached its climax on 8 September.

The second change made by Moltke was to alter Schlieffen's right-to-left wing strength ratio from seven to one to an initial ratio of three to one.<sup>62</sup> Actually after 28 August the diminished numbers of the three field armies on the extreme right were only about equal to the strength of the left wing on the Moselle River.<sup>63</sup> The reasons for this diminution of the cutting edge of the enveloping force will be discussed below. As so weakened, the German right wing could not possibly perform the tasks envisioned by Schlieffen.<sup>64</sup>

But of far greater significance was Moltke's adoption of an entirely different strategic concept. Rather surprisingly he decided to fight the decisive battle in Lorraine.<sup>65</sup> He was impressed by the

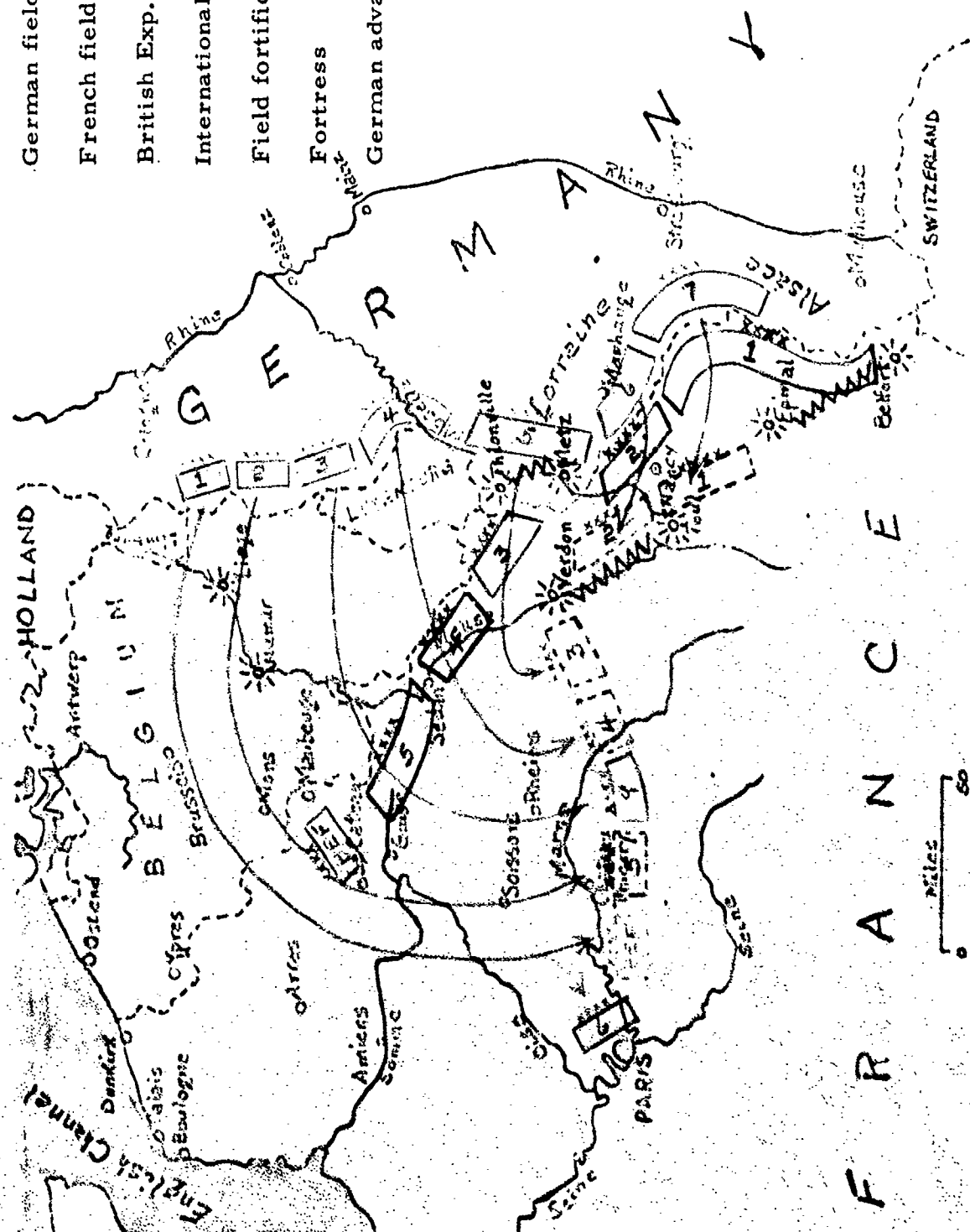
fact that French forces invading that province would be vulnerable when they left their fortifications and could be driven against the Vosages Mountains and the Rhine where they could be destroyed. For Moltke this course had both a military and a political advantage. The military advantage was that a decision could be obtained there in three to four weeks instead of the six weeks required in northwestern France, thus permitting an earlier redeployment to the crumbling eastern theatre.<sup>66</sup> The political advantage was that Germany would be spared a foreign invasion and consequently the prestige of the Emperor and Army would be preserved intact.<sup>67</sup> Under this concept the role of the right-wing armies, instead of being the instrument by which the campaign was to be decided, was converted to a secondary one designed to encourage the French to launch their invasion of Lorraine. Whatever small chance this operation had was dissipated when Moltke tolerated a premature counterattack by his left-wing armies before the French had advanced far enough into Lorraine. As a result the German reaction was largely a frontal attack rather than a flank attack as envisioned by Moltke which merely drove the French back into their eastern fortresses where they were impervious to successive futile German efforts. (This was the very eventuality which Schlieffen wanted to avoid.) After it became clear that his left-wing armies could not achieve success against the eastern French fortress belt, Moltke belatedly and rather desperately resurrected the idea of seeking the decision in northwestern France. But by then the

right-wing armies, which had not been reinforced as Schlieffen had intended and had even had forces withdrawn from their order of battle (see below), were too weak to achieve a success. Further, because the French were able to hold their right flank with minimum forces inside the sanctuary of their eastern fortress belt, they could withdraw sizable forces from that area and redeploy them quickly by an efficient railway system to the Paris sector. The German right-wing armies, already exhausted from steady marching for some five weeks, had no transport of any kind following destruction by the retreating French of their rail lines north of Paris.<sup>68</sup> In sum, then, Moltke attempted a double envelopment--a project with little chance of success because of insufficient numbers and because the fortified zone in northeastern France made success there virtually impossible.<sup>69</sup> (See Map 2 overleaf.)

Of decisive importance in the German failure at the Marne were Moltke's personal failures. First, he lacked the moral courage to accept the risks inherent in Schlieffen's Plan in dealing with a perilous strategic situation which required the assumption of risks if there were to be any chance of success.<sup>70</sup> Related to this failure of nerve was his vacillation between northeastern and northwestern France as the situs for his main effort.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, he succeeded in neither place. Second, he failed to maintain centralized control of his field armies with the result that there was marked disunity of effort.<sup>72</sup> This requirement for centralized direction was an immediate personal responsibility. The

# MOLTKE'S 1914 CAMPAIGN

- German field army
- French field army
- British Exp. Force
- International boundary
- Field fortification
- Fortress
- German advance



MAP 2



failure to fulfill this responsibility can hardly be excused, regardless of the wide scope of the battlefield and the distances involved. Third, his lack of resolution at the climax of the campaign on 8 September sealed the doom of his Army and country.<sup>73</sup> It is likely that, despite all previous difficulties, vacillation and temporizing, the situation could still have been retrieved if only he had personally persevered, for the right-wing German armies maintained a tactical superiority over their French adversaries right up to the time they were ordered to retire and regroup. With greater resolve on his part at this critical point, his armies could yet have prevailed.<sup>74</sup> Thus, as the individual primarily responsible for Germany's failure at the Marne,<sup>75</sup> Moltke emerges as a rather tragic figure, for he possessed admirable qualities and had made significant contributions to the Army before the war.<sup>76</sup>

Certain other factors which contributed to German failure at the Marne should be mentioned in passing. In the first place, there were simply inadequate forces in the right wing to perform the tasks assigned to it. The units left behind to secure Belgium were not replaced as Schlieffen had planned. Of perhaps even greater importance, two corps were taken from it after the Battle of the Frontiers to reinforce the small field army defending East Prussia.<sup>77</sup> In this fashion was Schlieffen's admonition to keep the right wing strong ignored. The two corps sent east would probably have turned the tide at the Marne in Germany's favor.<sup>78</sup> On such relatively small decisions does the fate of war sometimes turn. A

second factor was the faulty command organization of the German field armies, that is, the absence of army group headquarters as an instrumentality of command between OHL and the armies. The expedient of giving operational control to one of the field army commanders in each wing proved unsatisfactory because this makeshift arrangement did not provide the detachment required for objective strategic decisions.<sup>79</sup> A third factor was the breakdown of communications between OHL and field army headquarters. Radio was in its infancy, the telephone was not satisfactory over great distances (because of the absence of amplifiers in 1914), and wireless was slow. In short, German communications were a shambles.<sup>80</sup> This deficiency explains the extraordinary episode of the Hentach mission.<sup>81</sup> Finally, there was the superior ability of the French to reinforce the Paris sector in September through the use of the fine rail system that was keyed to their capital, whereas the Germans had to continue to rely on foot marches by infantry contingents already weary from uninterrupted forced marches for five weeks.<sup>82</sup>

#### SCHLIEFFEN PLAN'S PROSPECTS

Would the Schlieffen Plan have been successful if it had been implemented in the manner contemplated by its architect? It is useless for the most part to speculate on what might have been in history. And yet, because of the magnitude of events in this instance and the awesome consequences involved for so many, the question has an undeniable

fascination here. Most writers who have taken a position seem to agree that, if operations in 1914 had been conducted resolutely in accordance with Schlieffen's concept, the total defeat of the French Army would have ensued.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, two historians at least have expressed a contrary view.

Professor Ritter, somewhat surprisingly, believed that because of various weaknesses the Plan, if implemented, would not have had too good a chance of success. He cited the problem of maintaining centralized control of an operation of the magnitude envisioned by Schlieffen, the loss of momentum attending a deep thrust into enemy territory, the great difficulty in supplying and reinforcing over great distances without rail lines, inadequate forces to man the formations contemplated by Schlieffen, and the fact that the plan was conceived without reference to existing political realities.<sup>84</sup> Robert B. Asprey has taken Professor Ritter to task for these criticisms with the observation that his "attempts to denigrate Schlieffen's strategy [do not] seem wholly justified by fact."<sup>85</sup> And, indeed, none of these criticisms seems to be uniquely applicable to Schlieffen's concept. The same points apply also to the operation conducted by Moltke or to any extended invasion of a foreign country. Further, the Ritter objections are lacking in specificity to be really convincing.

A younger member of the academic community, Professor Larry H. Addington,<sup>86</sup> has recently also taken issue with the prevailing view. He

bases his position on more pragmatic grounds, namely, the infeasibility of Schlieffen's idea from a logistics point of view and its impracticality in terms of the impossible physical stamina demands on the participating troops. With respect to the former point, he demonstrates that the tremendous supply needs of the right wing envisioned by Schlieffen could not have been satisfied by horse-drawn transport from railheads far to the rear despite the herculean efforts that could have been expected from combat service support elements.<sup>87</sup> As regards the latter point, he indicates that the physical demands on the troops would have led to exhaustion.<sup>88</sup> Professor Addington's first point seems to be well conceived but his calculations demonstrate only that the German supply system could not have supported a right wing of the magnitude indicated by Schlieffen's seven-to-one ratio. He has not shown that a lighter force employing the Schlieffen concept could not have been supplied. Could not a right wing in a four-to-one or even three-to-one ratio have been marginally supplied to a sufficient extent to have made the basic operation feasible? Insofar as his point about physical demands is concerned, a larger body of troops would have been no more exhausted than those who actually comprised the right-wing force in 1914. Admittedly the latter were on the verge of exhaustion but still performed creditably in combat when called upon. There is no reason to believe a larger number would not have performed as well provided they were furnished with minimum required support.

Whatever conclusion one comes to about these issues, Professor Addington's thesis is an interesting one.

Sewell Tyng was not willing to concede that faithfulness to Schlieffen's Plan would necessarily have brought total victory in France. He believed there were too many variables to permit an accurate evaluation of this question but he did readily admit that Moltke's failure to appreciate Schlieffen's concept was fatal to German chances at the Marne.<sup>89</sup>

For all his thoroughness, Schlieffen doubtlessly did overlook some important considerations (as Professor Addington has pointed out) and the unforeseeable hazards of battle would unquestionably have presented difficult problems; but, in view of the fact that the German tide was just barely stemmed in 1914 even when defective strategy and irresolute top command adversely affected the campaign actually conducted, it is difficult to see how an operation resolutely pushed and utilizing the Schlieffen concept could have failed. The margin of failure was so slight in the actual event that even the smallest improvement makes it seem probable that the scales would have tipped the other way. And if this eventuality had occurred, the consequences would have been catastrophic, for then Germany would indeed have been master of continental Europe after the Central Powers had defeated Russia at their leisure. Even at the height of her power Nazi Germany never enjoyed this status. The belief here is that Imperial Germany was denied this coveted prize only because of the absence of a resolute supreme commander in 1914 and

his failure to employ the Schlieffen Plan. The question then would have been whether Britain would have been willing to come to terms with a triumphant Germany and, if so, on what terms.

### THE ALTERNATIVE

Whatever its strictly military merits may have been, proper evaluation of the Plan requires consideration of its impact in the larger context of how well it actually served Germany's national security policy. As already noted, Professor Albertini has strongly condemned Schlieffen's creation because of its political disadvantages, the restrictions it imposed on the German government's ability to maneuver diplomatically, and the moral opprobrium which its execution entailed. In brief, the Plan's political disadvantages were that it brought Great Britain into the war as an active participant against Germany and provided two of Germany's allies--Italy and Roumania--with a pretext for remaining neutral upon the outbreak of hostilities. It was prejudicial to diplomatic maneuvering because mobilization required war thus giving the government "only the choice between leaving Germany disarmed or plunging her headlong into the mortal perils of a general war."<sup>90</sup> And, of course, the moral disadvantage of the Plan was that the violation of Belgian neutrality cast Germany in the role of an international pariah.<sup>91</sup>

Was there an alternative which would have better served Imperial Germany's security interests? That which immediately occurs is the defensive strategy formulated by the elder Moltke after the wars of

unification which could perhaps have been adapted to the somewhat changed strategic circumstances in Europe during the decade before World War I. The venerable field marshal's planning was based on the premise that in a two-front war Germany's resources would not have been adequate to win a decisive victory. Therefore, his strategy was designed to facilitate a favorable negotiated peace, a goal that corresponded with Bismarck's policy after 1871 which sought no further territorial gains in Europe. This relatively modest goal was to be achieved by a division of forces (in contrast to Schlieffen's idea of concentrating for decisive action in one area at a time). At the outset of a two-front war the elder Moltke would have had Germany stand on the defensive in the west, taking advantage of the narrower and more defensible frontier with France. In the east he planned to launch a series of limited offensives in conjunction with Austria-Hungary against the Czar's armies in Russian Poland to secure a succession of tactical successes. In a strategic sense these operations would have been of a "spoiling" nature and not designed to achieve total victory over Russia. No pursuit was planned into the Russian interior where geography militated against encirclement. Moltke believed that these limited successes in Poland would then permit him to redeploy the bulk of his forces to the Rhine. Though his intentions at this point are not entirely clear, it appears that he hoped to be able to draw the French field armies

into a trap in Lorraine where he expected to inflict a decisive defeat upon them. But after this success he contemplated leaving to the civil authorities the conclusion of a negotiated peace settlement.<sup>92</sup>

It is interesting to note that Winston Churchill's prescription for an appropriate course of action by Germany in 1914 was remarkably similar to the plans of the elder Moltke.<sup>93</sup> Professor Ritter also expressed a strong preference for this defensive, limited form of strategy.<sup>94</sup> The German academician has summed up the political and military advantages of such a strategy. Politically, under this formula, Britain would probably have abstained and Belgium would not have been ranged against Germany. French enthusiasm would have been dulled. Militarily, the Russian threat could have been neutralized more easily by reason of the fact that the Austrian Army could have been used to better advantage in limited joint operations of the two Central Powers, rather than its being dissipated in commitment against the enemy by itself without German support. Professor Ritter concedes, however, that this form of strategy ruled out decisive victory and at best would have resulted only in a perpetuation of the status quo ante. His premise about British abstinence under these circumstances is questionable because Britain was actually more concerned with maintaining a balance of power through support of France than in upholding the integrity of Belgium as a matter of principle.



Churchill particularly, in his inimitable style, makes a strong case for the elder Moltke's strategy. But it is all just a bit too facile. Conditions had changed since that strategy had been adopted a generation previously. In the meantime the French Army had become much larger and stronger, while the construction of Russian fortifications rendered spoiling attacks of doubtful utility. The French undoubtedly could have been held along the Rhine but only by sizable German forces. Could the remainder of the German Army in conjunction with the unreliable Austrian Army have temporized indefinitely while the huge Russian forces mobilized virtually at their convenience? Of greater significance, the psychological tenor of the times and of the country would not have permitted the German Army to assume a passive, defensive posture in 1914. The German people were fully conscious of the vigor and potential of their young country, a restless dynamism pervaded every facet of the national being, the government pursued a policy aimed at continental hegemony, and even the Social Democrats wholeheartedly supported a vigorous prosecution of the war. In this atmosphere a military strategy of passivity, although perhaps more prudent in an ultimate sense, was out of the question as a practical matter.

#### SUMMARY

The alignment of the European powers in the first decade of the twentieth century was, when viewed in broad perspective, principally a

reaction to the excessively ambitious foreign policy of Imperial Germany which had as its objects continental hegemony, the acquisition of a colonial empire, and economic penetration of the Middle East. To redress the adverse strategic imbalance that resulted, a national security policy was adopted which was designed to split the Triple Entente and particularly to secure British neutrality in the event of war. To this end, diplomatic and dynastic efforts were made to break the unfavorable strategic setting. When these measures failed and the ultimate test of strength came in 1914, complete reliance was placed on a grand design of military strategy.

The Schlieffen Plan has been referred to as a "project of desperation."<sup>95</sup> If this characterization is accurate, it is so because of the desperate situation with which it was designed to deal. In this sense it was the product of the ill-advised policy pursued by the civil authorities. In any event, it perfectly complemented that policy and, if successful, would have achieved that policy's aims.

At bottom there is a certain irony about all of this. Because of the very unfavorable strategic situation bequeathed to the military planners by the civilian authorities--a situation arising from a foreign policy ultimately based on the nation's military potential--the former found it necessary to undertake a military operation which entailed serious political disadvantages. Thus the irony was that unwittingly each group created for the other very difficult problems. The efforts

of each, in turn, to find solutions to these problems and retrieve the indiscretions of the other contributed to the disaster that eventually overtook their country.

### LESSONS FOR U. S. SECURITY

Governmental organization, politico-military relationships and the international concerns of Imperial Germany prior to the outbreak of World War I differed materially from comparable conditions that exist for the United States today. Nevertheless, the German experience of that era has certain significant lessons for our country in the present era. First, German history illustrates the disadvantages of excessive dependence on what Samuel P. Huntington has labeled "strategic monism", that is, reliance upon a single strategic concept or weapons system as a means of achieving military security.<sup>96</sup> Lest it be imagined that our leaders could not possibly be so faulted, one need only go back to the decade of the nineteen fifties when U. S. security was based on the highly restrictive doctrine of massive retaliation. Just as the military rigidity of the Schlieffen Plan compelled German leaders in a time of crisis to choose between "leaving [their country] disarmed or plunging her headlong into the mortal perils of a general war,"<sup>97</sup> so massive retaliation offered our leaders "only two choices, the initiation of general war or compromise and retreat."<sup>98</sup> Although the doctrine of flexible response replaced massive retaliation in the decade of the

nineteen sixties, the limitations of strategic monism still threaten our military planning in a different form. Now the threat is embodied in a tendency to place primary reliance on the nuclear-powered, missile-carrying submarine as the ultimate offensive instrument of our armed forces to the virtual exclusion of other instrumentalities. The advantages of strategic pluralism, in providing more than one strategy and a variety of weapons to deal with a diversity of potential security threats, are obvious.

A second lesson to be derived from German experience in the early part of the century is the need for effective coordination between civil authorities and military planners to the end that political and military considerations may be properly integrated to form a unitary national security policy. German policy, as pointed out above, suffered from the fact that military planning was carried on in camera without reference to the civil authorities. This practice was primarily the result of the absence of joint civil-military defense councils.<sup>99</sup> General Maxwell D. Taylor<sup>100</sup> has commented on the lack of meaningful communication between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and top U. S. civil authorities (i. e., the Secretary of Defense and President) in the past on basic issues of national security policy.<sup>101</sup> Unlike the Germans, our Government has provided a mechanism for the coordination of politico-military aspects of national security problems but the trouble is that this mechanism, the

National Security Council, has not been very effective in this role. The Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery of the Senate Committee on Government Operations took note of this deficiency in a study prepared in 1960.<sup>102</sup> Shortly thereafter the Bay of Pigs fiasco demonstrated the accuracy of the Subcommittee's observation. General Taylor has also commented on the failure of the National Security Council to provide the Joint Chiefs of Staff with clear guidance to govern the formulation of strategic planning.<sup>103</sup> As a result, military planning has not always corresponded with the ideas of the civil authorities.

Ultimately the national security policy of the United States is determined by the President upon the advice of the National Security Council and his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs. Except for the latter years of the Johnson Administration when our involvement in Vietnam was at its peak, the voice of the military has been largely submerged in top-level consideration of national security policy. The armed forces do not have their own representation on the Council. (Sometimes the JCS Chairman accompanies the Secretary of Defense to Council meetings.) Nor does the Secretary always represent the strictly military point of view.<sup>104</sup> Thus, just as was the case in Imperial Germany, there is a civil-military dichotomy at the highest level of government, though for quite different reasons. The national interest requires that the military have the opportunity to have its views heard when national security policy is considered. This need is all the greater at a time when

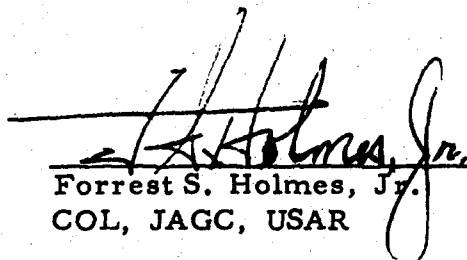
anti-military sentiment is so prevalent throughout the land.

A third lesson, which is a corollary of the second, is the need to strike a proper balance between political commitments and military capability. The Germans made a commitment to their Austrian ally which, in the event, was beyond their military ability to fulfill. For our part we have treaty obligations to many nations all over the world. Are all of these commitments realistic now in view of the sharp curtailment of our military power and in view of the pervasive public reaction to our involvement in southeast Asia?

A fourth lesson relates to the necessity of preventing an imbalance of military power in the first instance so that dependence on a "project of desperation" is not required as a basis of military strategy. Yet, in the opinion of one writer at least, this is the very development that appears to be in prospect for the United States.<sup>105</sup> According to this view, the trend will be back toward more reliance on the massive retaliation concept in lieu of flexible response as a result of the reduction of our conventional forces and public rejection of any more Vietnam-type interventions. The prospect is not a very reassuring one.

But the most important lesson of all, in the present writer's opinion, pertains to loss of will. When Moltke lost his will to persevere at the climax of the Marne campaign--at the very time his right-wing armies stood on the threshold of victory and were still besting their adversaries tactically despite near exhaustion--at that moment the

German Army was defeated. By contrast, our failure of resolve is not that of a commander. Our failure is even more significant; it is the incipient loss of national will. A nation's strength is not measured by military power alone. Another vital ingredient is a national will to assume the responsibilities of a great power. Without the latter the former is an illusion. The signs of our weakening national resolve are manifest for all to see--the imminent end of the draft, widespread sentiment to abandon the South Vietnamese to their fate, unwillingness to maintain adequate force levels in Europe, and congressional reluctance to appropriate the funds required for further development of advanced weapons systems. These symptoms of spiritual weakness bode ill for the future if we hope long to prevail over our dedicated adversaries. For this purpose a recommitment to our traditional national goals will be required. For us, then, the real lesson of the Marne, fifty-eight years after that monumental event, should be an awareness of the consequences of loss of the will to persevere in the face of adversity. History has important lessons for those with the perception to appreciate their significance.

  
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## FOOTNOTES

1. Formerly professor of history at Dartmouth College (1902-1914), Smith College (1914-1929) and Harvard University (1929-1946). Now deceased, he was a leader of the moderate revisionists.

2. Sidney B. Fay, Origins of the World War (1930), vol. 2, pp. 550, 554-555. This view of relative responsibility for outbreak of the war is concurred in by Professor Walter P. "Buzzer" Hall, late Dodge Professor of History at Princeton University, in his World Wars and Revolutions (1952) at pp. 34-35.

3. Professor emeritus of modern history at the University of Chicago where he held the Andrew MacLeish Distinguished Service Chair. He was early identified with the anti-revisionist school.

4. Bernadotte E. Schmitt, The Coming of the War, 1914 (1930), vol. 1, p. 321.

5. A leading Italian scholar who died in 1941 after completing The Origins of the War of 1914, undoubtedly the most comprehensive and detailed study of the subject to appear to date.

6. Luigi Albertini, The Origins of the War of 1914 (English ed., 1953), vol. 3, pp. 248, 253.

7. Professor of history at Hamburg University. He lectured widely in the United States and in 1965 was a member of the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton.

8. Germany's Aims in the First World War (1967).

9. Late professor of modern European history at Freiburg University from 1924 to 1956. Professor Ritter died on 1 July 1967.

10. Gerhard Ritter, "A New War-Guilt Thesis?" in The Outbreak of the First World War: Who or What Was Responsible?, edited by Dwight E. Lee (1970), pp. 103-109.

11. Prince Otto Bismarck was the first Chancellor of the German Empire. He served in this capacity until his dismissal by Wilhelm II in 1890.



12. Soon after Bismarck's successor (Caprivi) allowed the so-called reinsurance treaty with Russia to lapse, that absolutist state looked about for a new alignment and somewhat in desperation decided to ally itself with republican France in 1893. More than a decade later, upon the settlement of their differences in Africa, Britain and France came to an understanding which became known as the Entente Cordiale. Similarly, with the resolution of Russo-British differences in Persia and Afghanistan, those two countries arrived at an informal but definite agreement in 1907. The collective result of these separate undertakings was a loose alliance which for easy reference has been called the Triple Entente. However, unlike the Triple Alliance of the Central Powers, it did not involve (except in the case of the agreement between Russia and France) a formal and binding commitment.

13. Bismarck was the architect of the Triple Alliance. In 1879 he concluded a pact with Austria-Hungary to which Italy acceded in 1882 upon the initiative of Germany. The Alliance, which was renewed five times in the interval prior to World War I, was defensive by its terms. Austria allied herself with Germany for support of her ambitions in the Balkans vis-a-vis Russia. Italy was motivated to join because of her competition with France. As stated in the text, Bismarck regarded the alliance as defensive only and, indeed, did not rely solely on the protection it afforded but obtained additional support through the reinsurance treaty with Russia.

14. Valter P. Hall, World Wars and Revolutions (1952), p. 23. The facts of the Bosnian crisis may be summarized briefly. At a secret meeting in the fall of 1908 the foreign ministers of Austria-Hungary and Russia, Aehrenthal and Izvol'ski, struck a personal bargain under which the Russian agreed to acquiesce in Austria's formal annexation of the Balkan provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were under Turkish suzerainty but had been administered by the Dual Monarchy since the Congress of Berlin in 1878, in exchange for Austrian support for the opening of the Dardanelles for the passage of Russian warships. Izvol'ski thought Aehrenthal would delay the Austrian announcement of annexation until he (Izvol'ski) had consulted and won the support of the other powers for the opening of the Dardanelles. However, Aehrenthal acted sooner than Izvol'ski had expected and when Britain--to the Russian foreign minister's surprise--opposed the Dardanelles proposal, Izvol'ski felt he had been duped and insisted on a reconvening of the parties to the Congress of Berlin. Germany, which at first was greatly disturbed by the Austrian action because of its desire to court the favor of the new Young Turk regime, finally decided that Austria must be supported in view of the paramount German

interest in promoting the concept of reciprocal loyalty by the Triple Alliance partners. This crisis was finally resolved in the spring of 1909 when Germany offered Izvolski the face-saving device of undertaking to obtain the formal approval of the Berlin Congress parties to the Austrian annexation upon the advance agreement of Izvolski to support the Austrian action. As part of the agreement Turkey was compensated for the loss of its titular rights in the two Balkan provinces by a cash payment. However, Izvolski was discredited in his own country and was dismissed by the Czar the following year. Thereafter he served as Russian ambassador in Paris until 1916. For a detailed discussion of this episode see Raymond J. Sontag, European Diplomatic History, 1871-1932 (1933), pp. 116-125.

15. Gordon A. Craig, The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640-1945 (1955), p. 286. Sontag, p. 124.

16. Fritz Fischer, Germany's Aims in the First World War (1967), p. 30. It is not entirely clear how German support of Italian ambitions in north Africa would encourage Britain to approach the Triple Alliance. Presumably the thought here is that in order to protect her own interests in Africa (primarily in Egypt) against Italian encroachment Britain would be inclined to come to some kind of understanding with Italy and Germany.

17. Wilhelm II's abortive effort at Bjorko in 1905 was not his first attempt on the dynastic level. A year earlier he undertook to assist his military planners (the Bjorko negotiations, of course, and the other efforts discussed in the text were aimed at diplomatic results rather than military advantage) by a rather heavy-handed overture to Leopold II, King of the Belgians, upon the occasion of a state visit by the latter to Berlin. Before dinner on the last day of the visit Wilhelm took Leopold aside and suggested, not too obliquely, that the Belgian King could extend his scepter over French Flanders and Artois if he cooperated in the event of a Franco-German war by permitting passage of German forces. According to Prince Bulow's (Imperial Chancellor, 1903-1909) account of this event, the King was offended and replied that his ministers and parliament would not for a moment consider such a suggestion. In his turn Wilhelm, ever conscious of the monarchical principle, stiffly retorted that he "could not respect a monarch who felt responsible to his deputies and his ministers instead of to our God in Heaven alone." The King was visibly shaken by the exchange, scarcely spoke during the official dinner that followed, and upon his departure for the railway station immediately afterward was so upset that he put on his Prussian dragoon helmet backward to the dismay of the military martinets among his hosts. Bernard von Bulow, Memoirs of Prince von Bulow (1931), vol. 2, pp. 84-85. Not easily discouraged or

short of memory, Wilhelm repeated the effort with Leopold's successor, King Albert, in November 1913 when the latter visited Berlin. Though details of Albert's reactions are not known, his negative decision was the same as that of Leopold. Fischer, pp. 37-38. These incidents are interesting, wholly apart from the personality aspects, as indicative of (1) Wilhelm's appreciation of his general staff's plans with respect to Belgium and (2) his willingness to make dynastic overtures on behalf of his military as well as diplomatic minions.

18. This German support consisted of coaling the Russian fleet bound for Asiatic waters and seconding Russia in the dispute with Britain over the Dogger Bank incident which was precipitated by the action of the Russian fleet commander in opening fire on British fishing boats in the mistaken belief they were Japanese torpedo boats.

19. Fischer, p. 21.

20. This crisis, when viewed in larger perspective, was part of the German plan to form a continental alliance and thus to neutralize the Franco-Russian alliance. The immediate subject of the controversy was French economic penetration of Morocco which, as German authorities pointed out correctly, would inevitably lead to establishment of a French protectorate in violation of the Treaty of Madrid of 1880 by which the European powers had agreed to respect the independence of Morocco. Holstein (influential Foreign Ministry official) and Bulow (German Chancellor) planned to inflict a diplomatic defeat on France by reconvening the Madrid Treaty signatories who, it was thought, would expel France from Morocco. Thus chastised and deserted by her Russian ally--which result was confidently anticipated by reason of the Czar's just concluded undertaking at Bjorko--France would then be willing to come to terms with Germany and the continental alliance would become a reality. But the German diplomats overplayed their hand. Though willing to yield in Morocco, the French finally realized that the real purpose of German diplomacy was in effect to coerce them into a reconciliation. With strong British support the French successfully withstood this German challenge. Though superficially the ensuing Treaty of Algeciras (signed by the Madrid Treaty signatories) endorsed Germany's formal objective of preserving Morocco's nominal independence, in reality Germany suffered a serious reverse because she neither extirpated French influence nor gained a foothold herself. Soon thereafter followed the Russian repudiation of the Bjorko agreement. German plans for a continental alliance lay in ruins. Relations between France and Britain, on the other hand, were given an added boost by their cooperation in thwarting the German diplomatic thrust. For a detailed discussion of this whole rather complicated matter see Sontag, pp. 103-111.

21. Sometimes referred to as the second Moroccan crisis.
22. Hall, pp. 25-26. Fischer, p. 24. Sontag, pp. 153-160.
23. Lord Haldane was at the time British Secretary of State for War. He was Britain's principal negotiator in these protracted conversations which have become known generally by reference to his name.
24. Fischer, pp. 26-27. Sontag, pp. 168-171.
25. Prussian Minister of the Interior, 1907-1909; Imperial Chancellor, 1909-1917.
26. Foreign Minister, 1913-1916.
27. The term "July crisis" denotes the period of intense diplomatic activity commencing with the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, on 28 June 1914 and extending to the German declaration of war against France on 3 August 1914.
28. Fischer, pp. 91-92.
29. Ibid., pp. 72-74. It was deemed important to cast Russia in the role of aggressor in order to win the wholehearted support of the German people and specifically that of the liberal Social Democrats, the party of the growing industrial worker element. A second reason for the necessity to appear as the victim of aggression was to induce Italy and Roumania to fulfill their treaty obligations.
30. Fay, vol. 2, pp. 554-555.
31. Schmitt, vol. 1, p. 322.
32. Ritter, The Outbreak of the First World War, p. 106.
33. The nephew and namesake of Field Marshal Count Helmuth von Moltke, he was a personal favorite of Wilhelm II and served as the Emperor's military aide for a period. His principal command was as CG of the 1st Division of the Guards Corps from 1902 to 1904. After duty on the General Staff he was appointed its Chief in 1906 and served in that capacity until the end of the First Battle of the Marne when, broken in spirit and health, he was relieved. Later he served as titular commander of the home forces and died in 1916. For a brief description of his personal characteristics see footnote 76.

34. Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter (1970), vol. 2, pp. 227, 252.
35. Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State (1957), pp. 100, 101.
36. Ibid., p. 102. The Ministry of War had responsibility for administration, logistics, and budget matters; the Military Cabinet oversaw personnel matters; and the General Staff was concerned with strategic planning, training, and education of GS officers. Of course, as the war dragged on, this fragmentation of military authority diminished as the General Staff asserted an ever-increasing influence until the Hindenburg-Ludendorff partnership finally exercised complete control of the political as well as military spheres.
37. For a detailed discussion of civil-military relationships in Imperial Germany see Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter, vol. 2, chap. 7.
38. Under Grey's proposal the Austrians would have occupied Serbia's capital, Belgrade, as security for Serbian good faith but gone no further while a conference of the members of the two major European alliances was convened to arbitrate the Austro-Serbian differences. The conference was to have been sponsored jointly by Britain and Germany in the role of honest brokers. The idea was the most promising of all mediation proposals made during the July crisis and was tentatively supported by Bethmann but failed when Austria rejected it.
39. Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter, vol. 2, p. 253. Craig, p. 293. Albertini, on the other hand, represents Moltke's action here, not as a manifestation of his own conscientious convictions, but rather as the product of his belief that he was supporting a change in attitude by the Emperor (as revealed by marginalia). Albertini, vol. 3, pp. 8, 9. With all due respect to Albertini's impressive credentials, his rationale is not convincing here. Whatever weaknesses Moltke had, he was not a sycophant and was not afraid to take a position which differed from that of his imperial master. In this connection see the commentary in footnote 76 regarding his alteration of the nature of Army maneuvers.
40. Albertini, vol. 3, p. 11. Walter Gorrilitz, The German General Staff, 1657-1945 (1953), p. 153. For a contrary view which, to a great extent, exculpates Moltke see Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter, vol. 2, p. 258.
41. Albertini, vol. 3, p. 11.
42. Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter, vol. 2, p. 258. Gorrilitz, p. 153.

43. Both of these events actually took effect on 1 August. Thus, despite his loss to Moltke, Bethmann still succeeded in partially shifting the onus of war responsibility to Russia by reason of the latter's general mobilization at noon on 31 July. Also of interest is the fact that the Minister of War, General Erich Von Falkenhayn, did not favor taking these two steps immediately because of the adverse political consequences. Albertini, vol. 3, p. 192. But in this connection it may be observed that Falkenhayn did not have responsibility for the conduct of military operations.

44. German ambassador in London from 1912 to the outbreak of war. A career diplomat, the Prince's last days were marred by tragedy. Because of his indiscretion (or worse) in permitting the publication in January 1918 of a scathing attack on the circumstances of Germany's going to war, which was deemed to be subversive by the government and used for propaganda purposes by the Allies, he was deprived of his ambassadorial rank in the foreign service, stripped of his commission as a reserve officer in the Army, expelled from the Prussian Upper Chamber of which he had been a member for 16 years, and finally indicted for treason. Before he could be tried on this charge, the war ended and he was freed. However, he was largely discredited in the eyes of the German public, except for the more liberal element, and died an embittered man in 1928.

45. The Lichnowsky wires constitute a vignette of history that has provoked much interest. Grey's explanation of this incident later was that his suggestion of British and French neutrality was premised on a German undertaking to refrain from attacking Russia as well as France and thus to permit Austria and Russia to settle their differences between themselves; whereas Lichnowsky interpreted their discussions as a proposal of British and French neutrality conditioned upon German forbearance only with respect to France, Germany being free to join Austria in a war against Russia. Which diplomat was correct? Albertini discusses this incident at length (vol. 3, pp. 380-386) and after carefully examining all the evidence concludes that there was in fact no "misunderstanding"--the usual explanation offered--but that Lichnowsky's version of the incident reflected what actually occurred. It is Albertini's opinion that Grey did indeed offer the prospect of British and French neutrality if Germany refrained from invading France with no restrictions on a German attack against Russia and that Grey made this offer absurdly but in good faith. (vol. 3, p. 382) Albertini attributes Grey's preposterous offer to the fact that the British Foreign Secretary simply lost his head in the pressure of events. (vol. 3, p. 385) Edward F. Willis in his Prince Lichnowsky, Ambassador of Peace (1942) gives uncertain support to Albertini's conclusion. Willis states (pp. 264-265) that there is no evidence Lichnowsky indicated to Grey a German intention to remain neutral in a war between Austria and Russia

and that Grey never thought German forbearance with respect to Russia was possible. According to Willis, Grey did seriously discuss with Paul Cambon (the French ambassador at London) as well as with Lichnowsky the terms reported by the latter to Berlin on 1 August. (p. 265)

46. A particularly interesting account of this remarkable confrontation between Emperor and Chief of Staff appears in Correlli Barnett, The Swordbearers (1964), pp. 5-9.

47. Schlieffen served on the staff of a cavalry corps at Koniggratz (Sadowa) in 1866 and that battle made a profound impression on him. To his regret he did not participate in the frontier battles of the Franco-Prussian War but did see service in the Loire campaign on a field army staff. For seven years he was commanding officer of the First Guard Uhlan Regiment at Potsdam--the highest troop command of his career. In 1883 he was posted to the General Staff where he served continuously until his retirement. Extremely dedicated, he personified the military technician and scrupulously eschewed any political involvement. After the premature death of his wife he lost interest in all outside activities and devoted himself entirely to his professional responsibilities. A tireless worker, he was held in high esteem by his brother officers as a gifted strategist.

48. Hajo Holborn, Makers of Modern Strategy (1944), p. 187. Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter, vol. 2, p. 197.

49. The battle of Cannae was fought on 2 August 216 B.C. during the Second Punic War. Hannibal with 50,000 Carthaginians met 90,000 Romans under Varro. Accepting a temporary tactical withdrawal of his greatly outnumbered infantry in the center, Hannibal turned both Roman flanks with his cavalry. Once the double envelopment had been completed, throwing the Roman army into confusion as a result of the assault on its rear, the Carthaginian infantry counterattacked in front. With flight cut off, upwards of 80,000 Romans, including the Consul Aemilius, were slaughtered. Hannibal lost about 6,000.

50. Holborn, pp. 189-190.

51. The elder Moltke, in planning for a two-front war, had decided to attack Russia first while remaining on the defensive along the French frontier. Because of changes in circumstances since his time and also because of a different strategic objective, Schlieffen reversed these priorities. A fuller discussion of the elder Moltke's planning appears on pp. 24-25 of the text.

52. For a comprehensive treatment of Schlieffen's thoughts and formulation of his plan see chapter 8 of Makers of Modern Strategy.

53. Actually the term "right wing" as used here is a misnomer. The German forces to be arrayed against France were to be divided among seven field armies as shown on Map 1. The enveloping force of the right wing proper would consist of the first, second and third field armies. The fourth and fifth field armies would comprise the center of the total maneuver force in the western theatre. These two interior center armies would advance a limited distance to maintain a linear front with the huge right wing proper and to fix the French armies in their sector by offensive action. The left wing would consist of two relatively small field armies, the sixth and seventh. Thus the strength ratio of seven to one in the text refers to the relation between the numbers in the right and center armies combined (i. e., the first five armies) and the numbers in the sixth and seventh armies on the left. The forces assigned to the five armies on the right and in the center were to consist of 63 infantry divisions, 8 cavalry divisions, 22 reserve divisions plus 8 so-called ersatz corps as soon as mobilized. The two armies on the left between Metz and Strasbourg were to have 9 infantry divisions, 3 cavalry divisions, and 1 reserve brigade on the Metz-Strasbourg line with 3-1/2 brigades covering the right bank of the upper Rhine. Southern Alsace was to be completely undefended. Holborn, p. 191.

54. There were plans for Italian military assistance to Germany in Alsace and Lorraine. Under the military convention of 1888 between the two Triple Alliance partners Italy was to contribute a field army of 5 corps and 2 cavalry divisions to be sent to the upper Rhine. This undertaking was virtually rescinded by Italy at the time of her 1911-1912 war against Turkey when she seized Lybia. In the fall of 1913, that war having been concluded, General Alberto Pollio, Chief of the Italian General Staff and (unlike his government) a loyal adherent to the Triple Alliance, gave his personal promise to send a force of uncertain strength to the upper Rhine. To the consternation of his allies he suddenly died on 28 June 1914 but his successor, General Luigi Cadorna, was planning to send a force of the size originally contemplated by the convention of 1888 when his government intervened and announced its intention to remain neutral. Albertini, vol. 3, pp. 304-8. Sewell T. Tyng, The Campaign of the Marne, 1914 (1935), p. 9. If Schlieffen had counted on this Italian undertaking, the availability of an allied contingent might well have altered his strategic planning for his left wing. But it appears that, prophetically, he never put any faith in the Italian promise and hence that illusory promise played no part in his planned dispositions. Albertini, vol. 3, p. 237.



55. After his retirement in 1906 Schlieffen continued to reassess and refine his grand project. Shortly before his death he bequeathed to the younger Moltke in 1912 a second version of his Plan. The principal changes were elimination of the march through Holland when it became clear that neighbor would not agree to the transit of German troops (Schlieffen had expected in 1905 to secure Dutch acquiescence through diplomatic channels) and the elimination altogether of the single field army to protect East Prussia. Albertini, vol. 3, p. 242. Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter, vol. 2, p. 224. The latter change is rather startling and Schlieffen's justification of it is difficult to understand.

56. Albertini, vol. 3, p. 253.

57. Barnett, p. 38.

58. The numbers of the Russian Army were awesome. To a peacetime strength of 1,423,000 would be added 3,115,000 upon mobilization with a further reserve of 2,000,000 for subsequent call-up for an overall total of 6,538,000. Barbara Tuchman, The Guns of August (1962), p. 57. Offsetting these strength figures somewhat was the slowness of Russian mobilization, a factor which Schlieffen took into account in his planning.

59. When Schlieffen finalized his plan in 1905 shortly before his retirement, French strategy was governed by Plan 15 which followed the general policy originally adopted in 1887 of deploying the French field armies near the German frontier, preparatory to initiating hostilities with an invasion of Alsace and Lorraine. It is not known how successful German intelligence was in ferreting out the details of French strategic planning but the German General Staff was undoubtedly aware of the basic French intention to launch a major offensive into the "lost provinces" and the Rhineland. This traditional feature of French planning was perpetuated in Plan 17, the plan that was in effect and implemented in 1914 upon the outbreak of the Great War. Unlike the Schlieffen Plan, Plan 17 was not a detailed scheme of operations, specifying tactical movements in pre-arranged sequence and leading successively to anticipated particular results. Rather, it merely established the method and place of concentration, fixed the composition of the several French field armies and prescribed an offensive from northeastern France to exploit whatever opportunities developed in that sector. A wide degree of discretion was left to the commander in chief. For a detailed discussion of Plan 17 and its origins see chapter 2 of Tyng. Of particular interest is the explanation why Plan 17 did not provide for defense against a German attack on France through Belgium. In this connection see pp. 20-21. For another discussion from a somewhat different point of view see chapter 3 of Robert B. Asprey, The First Battle of the Marne (1962).

60. Hermann J. von Kuhl, GEN., The Marne Campaign, 1914 (1936), pp. 16, 296. Tyng, p. 9. Asprey, pp. 165, 171.

61. Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter, vol. 2, p. 266. An interesting sidelight of this change by Moltke was that knowledge of the coup de main was withheld from the civil authorities (presumably in the interest of preserving secrecy). Bethmann was first informed of this planned operation on 31 July 1914 to his dismay, for it meant that the initiation of military operations was required in a matter of hours rather than days.

62. Albertini, vol. 3, p. 241. Holborn, p. 195. Asprey, pp. 165-166.

63. Tuchman, p. 364.

64. Holborn, p. 198.

65. The adoption of this strategy was surprising in view of a statement General Hermann J. von Kuhl (chief of staff of the first German army in the 1914 Marne campaign) made to a special Reichstag committee in 1923. According to this statement Moltke in 1909 assigned then Colonel von Kuhl the mission of reconnoitering the entire French frontier area from Toul to Belfort for offensive possibilities so as to avoid the necessity of invading Belgium. Kuhl reported that an offensive against northeastern France would be impossible without extended siege operations. See footnote 38 to chapter 9, vol. 2, Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter.

66. Holborn, p. 195.

67. Arthur Rosenberg, The Birth of the German Republic, 1871-1918 (1931), p. 80.

68. A detailed description of Moltke's conduct of the campaign is set forth at Holborn, pp. 195-199.

69. Kuhl, p. 298. Tuchman, pp. 363, 436.

70. Asprey, p. 165.

71. Holborn, p. 199.

72. Kuhl, p. 305, Asprey, pp. 16-17, Holborn, p. 199. Rosenberg, p. 82.

73. Barnett, p. 93.

74. Ibid.

75. Asprey, p. 164.

76. Cultured, sensitive, conscientious to a fault, and introspective, Moltke was not typical of the professional military officer of his time. He played the cello, painted and preferred Goethe for recreational reading. As an example of his sensitivity he forbade the serving of champagne at the OHL mess after hostilities began in deference to the privations of his combat troops. In poor health, he bore his responsibilities with difficulty. He was devoted to his wife and unburdened himself in long daily letters to her when he was absent from Berlin. For a portrait of his personal characteristics see Barnett, pp. 34-36, 49, and 86. Probably his most important contribution to the pre-war Army was his forthright overture to Wilhelm to discontinue the mere mock battles contrived for the self-gratification of the Emperor at annual maneuvers and to substitute serious training exercises incorporating conditions approximating actual combat. Asprey, p. 12. Gorlitz, p. 139. This was an accomplishment which even the redoubtable Schlieffen had not seen fit to attempt. In addition Moltke had modernized the Army by adopting a series of technical developments including heavy artillery, an air arm and improved equipment for the individual soldier. Asprey, p. 12.

77. Kuhl, p. 305. Tyng, p. 339. Asprey, p. 65, Holborn, p. 198. The irony in this transfer was that the Battle of Tannenberg was fought while the two corps were in transit. Thus they did not participate in the climactic engagements of either theatre.

78. Asprey, pp. 166-167.

79. Gorlitz, p. 157. Barnett, p. 45.

80. Asprey, p. 171. Kuhl, p. 305.

81. The reference here is to the dispatch by Moltke of LTC Hentsch, his chief of intelligence, to visit the headquarters of the three right-wing armies on the eve of the Marne climax. There is still much controversy about this remarkable incident in which Moltke apparently vested his staff officer with plenary authority to make major decisions of great import in his name. For an extended discussion of this interesting incident see Tyng, pp. 267-285.

82. Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter, vol. 2, p. 201.
83. Holborn, p. 199. Craig, p. 280. Gorlitz, p. 135. Asprey, p. 164. Kuhl, pp. 19, 304. Barnett, by implication, agrees when he attributes the Marne result to the failure of the German high command; see p. 93.
84. Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter, vol. 2, pp. 201-2, 215.
85. Asprey, p. 165.
86. Professor Addington has taught history at San Jose State College in California and at The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina, where he is now located. During 1968-69 he served as historical consultant to the Army War College's Institute of Advanced Study.
87. To establish this point Professor Addington used a 1923 monograph by Kuhl and Colonel Walter von Bergmann, first army DCS/Log, which was the subject of two unpublished Army War College analytical studies in 1931.
88. Larry H. Addington, The Blitzkrieg Era and the German General Staff, 1865-1941 (1971), pp. 19-22.
89. Tyng, pp. 337-338.
90. Albertini, vol. 3, p. 244.
91. Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 242-248, 253.
92. Addington, pp. 11-12. Asprey, pp. 7-8.
93. Winston S. Churchill, The World Crisis, 1911-1914 (1930), pp. 281-283.
94. Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter, vol. 2, pp. 203-205.
95. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 219.
96. Huntington, p. 418.
97. Albertini, vol. 3, p. 244.
98. Maxwell D. Taylor, GEN, The Uncertain Trumpet (1960), p. 5.
99. Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter, vol. 2, pp. 125, 206. Gorlitz, p. 132.

100. U. S. Army Chief of Staff, 1955-1959; military advisor to President Kennedy, 1961-1962; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1962-1964; U. S. Ambassador to the Government of Vietnam, 1964-1965; special consultant to President Johnson, 1965-1968.

101. Taylor, pp. 120-121.

102. Donald F. Bletz, COL, The Role of the Military Professional in U. S. Foreign Policy (1972), p. 86.

103. Taylor, pp. 82-83.

104. According to Huntington (p. 441), "[t]he Secretary has been more the delegate of the American people to the military than the delegate of the military to the American people."

105. Bletz, p. 283.

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